

## Maternal and Child Health Needs Assessment Parents of Children Aged 0-12



Assessment and report completed by:



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Caution .....	1
Participant Demographics .....	2
Main Themes.....	3
Challenges and Concerns .....	3
Services.....	5
Pregnancy and childbirth .....	6
Top Concerns.....	6
Conclusion/Recommendations .....	6

## INTRODUCTION



As set forth by the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, the Family and Community Health Bureau is conducting a needs assessment of the maternal and child health population in Montana. This project is designed to identify the health needs of infants, children, and women of childbearing age.

This report presents observations and analyses based on confidential focus groups conducted with parents of children 0-12 years of age. The Montana Family and Community Health Bureau commissioned external partners, Sofia Warden and Colleen Roylance of Health Improvement Team, LLC to moderate the five focus groups in this study. These focus groups were held between November 2009 and January 2010 in five locations throughout Montana: Billings, Hamilton, Miles City, Missoula, and the Blackfeet Reservation. Focus group sessions lasted approximately 90 to 120 minutes and were audiotaped.

## CAUTION

Focus group studies are conducted with small, carefully screened sample populations. Generally participants are not randomly selected; results may not be representative of the general population. Focus group research should be viewed as exploratory. The following observations are made from the limited context of these focus groups and should not be used as a substitute for quantitative research.

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender	n	%
Male	10	20%
Female	39	80%

Age	n	%
15-19	3	6%
20-29	27	55%
30-39	16	33%
40-49	2	4%
50-59	1	2%

### Your primary source of insurance:

Medicaid	18	38%
None	14	29%
Private Insurance	8	17%
IHS/PHS	8	17%

### Primary source of your child's/children's insurance:

Healthy Montana Kids Plus (Medicaid)	26	54%
IHS/PHS	7	15%
Private Insurance	7	15%
Healthy Montana Kids (CHIP)	4	8%
None	4	8%

### Do you have dental insurance?

Yes	14	29%
No	35	71%

### Does your child/children have dental insurance?

Yes	29	63%
No	17	37%

### Do you have vision insurance?

Yes	12	26%
No	35	74%

### Does your child/children have vision insurance?

Yes	25	58%
No	18	42%

### Do you have a primary/regular doctor?

Yes	23	48%
No	25	52%

### Does your child/children have a primary/regular doctor?

Yes	41	85%
No	7	15%

### What is your race?

White	33	63%
Native American/Alaska Native	15	29%
Asian	0	0%
Black/African American	0	0%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0%
Other	4	8%

### Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin?

Yes	3	6%
No	46	94%

### How many children are in your household?

1 Child	19	41%
2 Children	15	33%
3 Children	8	17%
4 Children	2	4%
5 Children	2	4%

### What are your children's ages?

Infant-5 years	38	58%
6-10 years	14	21%
11-14 years	10	15%
15-19 years	4	6%

## MAIN THEMES

### CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

When asked what challenges parents face in their community, parents expressed the same challenges for the 0-5 age group as they did for the 6-12 age group. In order by priority, the following concerns were reflected.

#### 1. Health Care

In all communities except the Blackfeet Reservation, parents indicated the most critical aspects of health care are cost, access and quality. Blackfeet Reservation parents mentioned they are more concerned with basic needs such as food and clothing.

Parents in all communities said they want to be able to discuss all topics relevant to keeping their children healthy: breastfeeding, nutrition, development, growth, and disabilities. For the most part, parents said they feel comfortable talking about these issues with their health care provider, who usually has the time available during appointments.

#### Cost

*"If you don't have Medicaid, you're in debt."* Many parents expressed concern about their ability to receive Medicaid due to their income. One parent said she quit her job in order to qualify for Medicaid while another said, *"If my husband does any overtime, it throws us over the income level"* for Medicaid. Several parents mentioned that the process of applying for Medicaid is long and difficult. Some parents mentioned the fear of making mistakes on the paperwork and getting *"booted out"* of the system.

#### Access

Access was defined as: the time it takes to get an appointment with a provider and finding a provider willing to take Medicaid. With the exception of Billings, parents indicated the number of health care providers who accept Medicaid is very limited.

The lack of specialists was voiced as a particular concern for parents in the smaller communities of Miles City, Blackfeet Reservation and Hamilton.

Parents on the Blackfeet Reservation said they are more concerned with access than affordability. Children are seen on a first-come, first-served basis for vision and dental appointments. One participant said parents *"have to wait in line at 6 a.m. and hope to get an appointment"*. This is further exacerbated by the limited number of openings available. Several parents on the Blackfeet Reservation said that the way Indian Health Service is staffed means *"you hope you can see a doctor and not just an RN"*.

#### Quality

In all communities except Billings, several parents mentioned the difficulty finding local providers that parents trust as competent and knowledgeable. Parents said that providers outside of their community are usually more competent.

## **2. Childcare**

The second biggest concern mentioned by a majority of parents in all communities is the availability and affordability of high quality childcare. One parent said, *"You want to feel confident leaving your child with them"*. This is exacerbated in both the Blackfeet Reservation and Missoula where parents commented that standard job wages are low.

## **3. Basic Needs**

On the Blackfeet Reservation, parents said they are more concerned about food, clothing and jobs than about health care cost or accessibility. They said this is just as important to them as childcare.

Having enough food was mentioned by several parents in Billings as well, especially for children 6-12 years old. One parent said *"resources dry up. WIC cuts off at five years"*. These parents said the reduced-fee lunch program, weekend/holiday food provided by the school district, the free lunches in the parks during summer and food boxes from the Salvation Army help. However, some parents discussed difficulties in obtaining food; long waits with restless and hungry children.

## **4. Activities**

This is one of the biggest concerns mentioned by many parents on the Blackfeet Reservation although several participants in Hamilton and Miles City also mentioned it as a concern. Parents said they would like to see an indoor play ground for children 0-5 years old. *"Safe and age appropriate places for my kids to go and interact with kids his age."* In Hamilton, parents agreed that there might be a couple of indoor activities for small children. However, they typically have a cost associated, which is unaffordable to some families.

On the Blackfeet Reservation, parents stated, there is an indoor skate park with limited hours but no movie theater, bowling alley or mall. The Blackfeet Reservation has a boarding school that allows public school children to participate in activities and most parents said it's a good program. The availability of safe activities in an alcohol and drug free environment would keep the kids *"from doing wrong"* and *"keep them out of trouble"*.

## **5. Transportation**

Parents on the Blackfeet Reservation mentioned transportation issues as a challenge. Participants said there is a transit system but it only operates Monday through Friday and ends at four in the afternoon.

## SERVICES

The following table lists resources mentioned during the focus groups and are not meant to be a complete list of available resources.

Agencies and Services				
Billings	Blackfeet Reservation	Hamilton	Miles City	Missoula
Human Resource Development Council Better Babies Montana Rescue Mission WIC STEP, Inc Salvation Army Scottish Rite Riverstone Residential Group Early Childhood Intervention	Early Head Start Head Start Bureau of Indian Affairs Boarding School WIC Low Energy Assistance Food Bank Blackfeet Housing Authority Po'ka Ranch Food stamps Family Connections Great Falls Quality Life Concepts Great Falls	Child Care Resources Head Start Public Health Nurse WIC Birthright First Way	Developmental Educational Assistance Program Custer County Community Health Center Public Health Nurse WIC	Early Head Start Head Start Public Health Nurse WIC Women's Opportunity and Resource Development, Inc First Way Families First Mothers of Pre-schoolers Family Dynamics Institute YWCA Boys and Girls Club Planned Parenthood Best Beginnings Blue Mountain Clinic Montana Cervical and Breast Program

## **PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH**

### **Local Health Care**

In all communities except Billings, this was mentioned as a big concern for expecting/new parents. One parent on the Blackfeet Reservation said she has “*no faith in the IHS doctors*” so drove to Cut Bank for services even though all services, including emergency, are available on the Blackfeet Reservation. This was echoed in Miles City where one parent said there is “*a lack of proper health care. You have to travel at least 80 miles to see an OB*”.

### **Information**

Parents in all communities said that more information for expecting/new parents is needed. This includes more information about available resources, what they do and how they can be contacted, including parenting groups and support groups. Several parents said this information should be given in the hospital and be made available in doctors’ offices. Most parents said they rely on friends, family and peers for information.

## **TOP CONCERNS**

When asked what they would change, the majority of parents in all communities expressed continuing frustration with the major concerns discussed in the Main Themes section of this report. Other respondents identified other concerns such as:

- Affordable health care
- Affordable and available childcare
- More health care specialists
- More competent physicians
- Less wait time for appointments
- Less wait time in the physician’s office
- Phone calls with doctors instead of visits

## **CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS**

Participants showed tremendous enthusiasm for participating in these focus groups. Many parents were thankful to have a forum in which they could voice their concerns. Participants in every focus group expressed how they learned about services and agencies from other participants. Several parents in each focus group exchanged contact information to gather in another forum, such as a support group or playgroup for their children.

These focus groups highlight some of the issues Montana families face when caring for young children. Relevant findings and recurring themes have been raised in these focus groups and strategies should be identified for improvement. Some of these strategies to consider are to:

- Survey a larger number of parents of young children to verify and analyze the qualitative results of these focus groups and identify other improvement opportunities.
- Set quantitative outcome goals to measure effectiveness of Maternal and Child Health Block Grant cycles.
- Plan and conduct a ‘road show’ throughout Montana to engage public health stakeholders (such as local health departments, state agencies, families, health plans, local public school systems). This ‘road show’ could utilize PowerPoint build around this report and discuss specific strategic planning and/or policy development.